

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 02692 071810Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 071703Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8216

S E C R E T ATHENS 2692

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR GR US

SUBJ: MILITARY FACILITIES NEGOTIATIONS: DISCUSSION WITH CARAMANLIS

1. EARLY THIS AFTERNOON AS I WAS CONCLUDING A PRIVATE MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS ON ANOTHER SUBJECT, I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE BILATERAL MILITARY FACILITIES NEGOTIATIONS, THE SECOND ROUND OF WHICH BEGAN IN ATHENS THIS MORNING.

2. I TOLD CARAMANLIS THAT FROM REPORTS I HAD THE GREEK DELEGATION TO THESE TALKS WAS OPERATING WITH VERY SPECIFIC AND, THUS FAR AT LEAST, UNCOMPROMISING INSTRUCTIONS, PARTICULARLY REGARDING THE AIR BASE AT HELLINIKON. CARAMANLIS ASKED ME TO BE MORE SPECIFIC AND I TOLD HIM THAT THE GREEK DELEGATION SEEMED TO BE INSISTING ON A COMPLETE CLOSURE OF THAT AIR BASE AND ALL THE U.S. FACILITIES THERE. I SAID THIS WOULD BE MOST DIFFICULT FOR US, THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO GO A LONG WAY TO TRY AND MEET GREEK REQUIREMENTS WITH RESPECT TO THAT BASE, BUT THAT WE FELT IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO NEGOTIATE SOME KIND OF ARRANGEMENT THAT WOULD MEET BOTH HIS GOVERNMENT'S REQUIREMENTS AND OUR OWN. FOR EXAMPLE, I SAID, THE U.S. DELEGATION WOULD BE DISCUSSING THESE NEXT FEW DAYS VARIOUS MEANS OF "HELLENIZING" THE BASE, BRINGING IT UNDER THE OVERALL COMMAND OF A GREEK OFFICER, TAKING DOWN ENGLISH SIGNS, REMOVING THE AMERICAN FLAG FROM THE ENTRANCE AND TERMINATING SUCH NON-ESSENTIAL FACILITIES AS THE PX AND THE COMMISSARY.

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HOWEVER, I SAID, WE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO

INCORPORATE REMAINING ESSENTIAL FACILITIES INTO THE OVERALL GREEK AIR BASE SITE AND UNDER OVERALL GREEK OFFICER COMMAND, WITH AMERICAN OFFICERS DIRECTING SPECIAL FACILITIES' OPERATIONS AS APPROPRIATE.

3. I TOLD CARAMANLIS THAT I WAS TAKING THIS UP WITH HIM ON MY OWN INITIATIVE AND THAT THERE WAS NO INTENTION ON THE PART OF THE USG TO LINK THESE MILITARY FACILITIES NEGOTIATIONS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS WE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING. HOWEVER, I SAID, THERE WAS NO POINT IN KIDDING OURSELVES, ALL OF THESE MATTERS AFFECTING US RELATIONS WITH GREECE, WHETHER BILATERAL, IN THE NATO CONTEXT, OR MULTILATERAL, HAD SOME DEGREE OF INTERRELATIONSHIP. CARAMANLIS DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE ANY TROUBLE WITH THIS POINT AND INDICATED HE ACCEPTED IT. HE SAID HE WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH THE APPROPRIATE MINISTERS AND GREEK NEGOTIATORS SO THAT HE PERSONALLY COULD GIVE THEM GUIDANCE ON THIS SUBJECT. HE DID NOT SAY WHAT THE GUIDANCE WOULD BE BUT I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WOULD INSTRUCT THEM TO TRY AND ACCOMMODATE OUR NEEDS AND REQUESTS IF HE FELT THEY WOULD BE POLITICALLY PALATABLE IN GREECE.

4. LATER, AS I WAS LEAVING CARAMANLIS' OFFICE, I RAN INTO DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF WITH WHOM I HAD DISCUSSED THIS VERY SAME POINT LAST FRIDAY MORNING. AVEROFF AND I WENT INTO A SIDE OFFICE AND DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT FURTHER. AVEROFF SAID THAT ONE OF THE PROBLEMS THAT HE AND CARAMANLIS FACED WAS THAT A WRITTEN REPORT HAD NOW BEEN PREPARED BY GREEK TECHNICAL EXPERTS IN WHICH THEY ASSERTED THAT NONE OF THE U.S. FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS AT THE HELLENIKON AIR BASE "DIRECTLY" SERVED GREECE'S SECURITY. AVEROFF AND I DISCUSSED THIS FOR A SHORT TIME AND HE SAID THAT PERHAPS A RATIONALE COULD BE FOUND FOR SOME OF THESE OPERATIONS "INDIRECTLY" SERVING GREECE'S SECURITY AND THAT THEY COULD BE PRESERVED ON THAT BASIS. IN ANY CASE, AVEROFF SAID HE WANTED TO ASSURE US THAT THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WOULD MAKE NO HASTY DECISIONS IN THIS AREA BUT WOULD CONSIDER OUR PROPOSALS AND SUGGESTIONS AS CAREFULLY AND SYMPATHETICALLY AS POSSIBLE BEFORE REACHING A FINAL DECISION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY BASES, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS02692
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750120-0223
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750477/aaaacsbv.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <03 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MILITARY FACILITIES NEGOTIATIONS: DISCUSSION WITH CARAMANLIS
TAGS: MARR, GR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006